

OPINIONS

Our common interests outweigh our differences

BY JIM REILAND

I managed salespeople for 30 years. Many didn't know how to talk with potential customers who were, after all, people just like them.

The advice I gave then and would offer today: "Talk about what you have in common and avoid politics." I suggested they search for clues like family or vacation photos on the desk or a framed quote hanging on the office wall that inspires or makes us laugh. Even the clothes we wear and cars we drive could reveal connections between us. I assured them that being professional, truthful, and reliable were more important than politics. "By the time people know you, it's not about your politics; it's about you," I said. Important advice when your income depends on getting along with others.

As we come into the 2024 elections, I think about the polarization attached to nearly every national policy issue—from border security to election integrity, affordable housing to student loan forgiveness—and how the fear of confrontation paralyzes us. It can prevent us from joining in community activities here in the Applegate Valley.

We forget that our many common interests far outweigh the issues that divide us. We share a love of the Applegate Valley and all it offers—or we wouldn't be here. So why do we let politics come between us?

What really matters is that we can rely on each other when we need help with a downed tree blocking a driveway, car trouble along a lonely road on a wintry

night, or a prolonged power outage that threatens to spoil a freezer full of food. When we need help or see an opportunity to assist, do we first ask "How did you vote in the last election"? Of course not. We help log out the tree, fix a flat tire, or loan a spare generator.

When it comes to emergencies, we set aside the question of politics. Most of us see someone in need and just stop to help. If we need help and someone comes to our rescue, we're grateful. It's what people do for each other; political differences be damned.

I'm not sure why so many of us draw the line at emergencies, but I hope that line can be redrawn to include giving of our time, talents, and support to the many community organizations throughout the Applegate Valley that work to make this an even better place to live...even if we're not sure we share the same politics. Collecting surplus produce to feed people in need. Advocating for forest or streamside health. Promoting literacy. Maintaining trails and recreation areas. Helping neighbors build and burn brush piles to reduce wildfire risk. Writing for our community newspaper. And so much more.

We jump in to help during an emergency—why hold back from efforts that makes our community stronger? Once we realize that we care for each other—no matter who that "other" is—and the place we live, politics really doesn't matter. Our community health depends on it.

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Pipe Fork needs to be preserved

BY GREG STANKO

You may have read the letters to the editor in the *Daily Courier* regarding Pipe Fork Creek or heard of the 34 citizens who graced the Josephine County Commissioners meeting in December, speaking up for the preservation of this watershed. Initially, the county wanted to auction it for clear-cutting, but an avalanche of letters from outraged citizens gave a temporary reprieve.

If you've ever walked the Layton Ditch trail up to Pipe Fork Creek, you've witnessed nature at its finest, indeed! It is home to elk, cougar, bear, and the Pacific fisher, just to name a few species. The year-round fresh, clear, cool waters of this creek are also ideal habitat for salmon and steelhead. The steepness of the surrounding valley and abundant canopy in which Pipe Fork is nestled provides a blanket of shade that nourishes flora and fauna in its cool, moist shadows. Also present along the creek edges is the easternmost stand of Port Orford cedar, with its kin in the adjoining research natural area (RNA). The biodiversity is extensive and unique. It's no small wonder it was nominated for Wild and Scenic designation. It's a magical place!

The efforts for preservation continue. Until this parcel of land is wedded to the adjoining research natural area, it remains subject to the whims of the commissioners. The area for "treatment," i.e., clear-cutting, is steep, and no amount of stream buffers could mitigate the ruination of this fragile riparian area.

Not only would the native population of Port Orford cedars be reduced, soil compaction, erosion and habitat loss would take their toll. Decreased water flows would affect the orchards, pastures,

nurseries, homestead gardens, wells, and aquifers replenished downstream.

Williams Community Forestry Project (WCFP), which has been diligently pursuing the preservation of this beautiful local wonder, was able to convince the Josephine County Commissioners to consider selling the 320 acres. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with congressional approval, applied and acquired funds from the Land and Water Conservation grant to purchase the land for inclusion in the RNA.

During the same time, a national organization, The Conservation Fund, became interested in making a bridge loan to the BLM and, after a Yellow Book Appraisal, made a generous offer to Josephine County to purchase the land for \$2,020,000, exceeding the county's estimated value of \$1.6 million. The commissioners, unfortunately, not seeing the tremendous value of Pipe Fork to the county, are asking for an additional \$750,000—despite continuing downward trends in timber prices and an appraisal that was for fair market value.

In light of an ever-warming climate and the scarcity of clean, fresh water, every means necessary should be pursued to protect water sources. Our very lives and livelihoods depend on it.

We need your help to preserve the water and wildlife of this unique biodiverse habitat so it can never be logged again. Ever. Please.

Visit williamscommunityforestproject.org to learn how to help. Thank you in advance!

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